

VII. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? - THE NEED FOR A "COHERENCE AGENDA"

We have just outlined a four-part rationale for Canada's promotion of international core labour rights. This rationale is consistent with basic Canadian interests and values - in promoting democratic and human rights values, and in sustaining and expanding a rules based system of international trade and economic integration. The rationale is also consistent with Sen's conception of advancing human freedom and it provides the sort of reminder of basic purposes which Nietzsche warned us is so often lacking in human affairs. Now is the time to consider a number of more concrete issues. Before doing so, however, there is a general lesson which needs to be identified - a lesson about "policy coherence".

There are three dimensions of coherence which need to be kept in mind in thinking through what will constitute a useful Canadian view:

- (1) Coherence in the entire range of Canada's international policy engagements - trade, aid, Bretton Woods Institutions, UN institutions, regional and multilateral economic and political fora, etc. (horizontal coherence).
- (2) Coherence between Canada's international policy stances and its domestic values and policies regarding the same set of issues - in this case labour rights (vertical coherence).
- (3) Coherence in a truly deeper sense. (Coherence via policy interpretation.) (Here I refer to a theme running through discussions earlier in this study and deeply associated with the work of Amartya Sen, reflected in the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework, essential to the philosophy underlying UNDP's Human Development Index, and much discussed in policy and academic circles. Here the coherence discussion is not the idea of "saying the same thing" in many places, but of a quite remarkable rethinking of what constitutes sound policy in the first place. The essence of the idea here is that discussed above - of an integrated approach to international economic, human rights, development, political (democratic), security, policy agenda. This is as opposed to the segregated approach to these issues, which in the past and until quite recently, drew a sharp line between the economic (trade, investment, commercial relations) on the one hand, and the social, democratic/human rights agenda on the other. On the old segregated view there was a policy of apartheid between the economic and the social. On this view, these agendas were segregated and could be sequenced. On this view human rights, democracy, and "social" agendas were seen as a set of luxury goods which could be purchased (if so desired) with the gains made from sound economic policies. Although the exact meets and bounds of the "Washington Consensus" may remain somewhat controversial, much of this segregated view cohered with that understanding. It would take a particularly inert sensory system to be immune to the shifting of the tectonic plates underlying the policy world on this fundamental point. While talk of "integration" may be cheap, it is at the root of both what is turning out to be the soundest thinking on the problems of global governance, and the necessary antidote to the political "backlash" against economic integration. One should not be sanguine here, however, because it is apparent (as noted above) that the segregated view has deep roots. Many will view the